2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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613 constituent parts. The simplest way of achieving this is for its internal differentiation into segments to be of a limited and balanced kind. That is why only the first order of segmentation, a division into major segments, is recognized in the corporate activities of a lineage. In Tale theory the source of this primary segmentation of the lineage is the minimal lineage, in which a group of brothers (two or more) are differentiated from one another as individuals each of whom is the potential founder of a new lineage, but are united through their common father. A pair of brothers by the same father (*sunzɔp*, sing. *sunzɔ*) are the potential originators of a pair of major segments of the lineage deriving from their father. So all major segments of a lineage of any span are visualized as being derived from brothers, sons of the lineage founder, and are described as *sunzɔp* to one another. Their lineage ties, summed up in the concept *sunzɔt* (brotherhood), are thought of as being founded on, and derived from, the ties that hold between brothers. By the rule of exogamy women members marry out of the lineage, so they do not contribute to its perpetuation and do not affect its organization.

613 595 [59] The growing-point of the lineage, it will be seen, is the family. It is always patrilocal; ideally, it is also polygynous. Thus children of the same man are differentiated from one another as children of different mothers. This provides a further criterion of differentiation within the lineage. Like the sons of different mothers and the same father, segments of a lineage may, in certain situations, be distinguished from one another by reference to their different progenitrices. In other situations, like the sons of one mother, segments of a lineage may be grouped together by reference to a common progenitrix.

613 A maximal lineage cannot, by definition, have any *sunzɔp* identified strictly in terms of common agnatic descent. If it had it would be a segment of a more inclusive lineage. The ancestor who founded it must be unique, in retrospect. As we have seen, he may be accounted for by a myth; but his unique place in the genealogical tree can sometimes be naturalistically explained. If the formation of recent lineage segments is studied, it can be seen that segments sometimes disappear, owing to the extinction of a branch of the lineage. When this happens, the surviving segments reach a new equilibrium. The defunct collateral line is forgotten in due course, together with its genealogy; for this no longer has any structural significance. Thus an existing maximal lineage may be merely the surviving segment of what might have been a wider maximal lineage.

It is characteristic of Tale social organization, however, that maximal lineages do often have *sunzɔp*, either through ties of clanship, or by incorporating, or being joined to, lineages not strictly of the same agnatic descent.

A lineage is a temporal system. Continuity in time is its fundamental quality. Its constitution and dimensions at a given time represent a phase of a process which, as the natives see it, has been going on in exactly the same way from the beginning of their social order and is continuing into the future. The contemporary phase of a lineage is more than a product of its past; it embodies all the significant changes that have occurred in it

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788 set up a shrine affiliated to Tɔŋna'ab at their own homes, and these
782 shrines are used by them (*vide* Field, op. cit.) in their own ritual practice
425 to cure witchcraft and dissipate other forms of magical misfortune or misdeeds.

431 This traffic is extremely profitable to the Hill Talis concerned in it.
788 The pilgrims bring gifts in money and kind beside which the traditional gifts of Mamprusi or Bulisi client villages pale into insignificance. Those
439 who have received benefits bring gifts. The medicine men who own
434 affiliated shrines pay heavily for the privilege and bring periodical gifts in gratitude for benefits received. These vary from a pound or two to £10, £20, and in at least one case, for the authenticity of which I have good evidence, £100. In addition the pilgrims pay generously for their board and lodging and for animals which they offer in sacrifice at the *Bɔyar*.

556 From the beginning this traffic was monopolized by one maximal
439 lineage of Tɛnzugu, Gɔlibdaan yidɛm of Bunkiuk. The head of this
471 lineage, the Gɔlibdaana, a shrewd and resolute man of unbounded ambition, was, until the recent political reorganization of the country, recognized by Government as the headman of the Hill clans. He used his political authority to keep the pilgrim traffic with the south in his own hands, allowing only a minor share of the profits to go to his fellow ritual functionaries of the *Bɔyar* (Wannii) to which his lineage belongs. With the aid of the young men of his lineage and young men of other Tɛnzugu clans attracted to him by the lure of gain he has built up a complex organization for keeping contact with Ashanti and Colony pilgrims and clients and for stimulating the flow of pilgrims. By Tale standards he is a Croesus, but it would be hopeless for an outsider to attempt to estimate his wealth. It is enough to see his huge and well-kept homestead, his
● [595] eighty wives, the sumptuous clothes he affects, the extravagance of his gifts to friends and adherents, to realize that he must derive an income of several hundred pounds a year entirely from this pilgrim traffic.

Though he is himself the principal beneficiary of this monopoly, all the members of his maximal lineage, except one segment, co-operate in running it and benefit from it. His closest partners are some of his own half-brothers and cousins, and their share of the profits is enough to make them considerably more wealthy than the average native. Two or three henchmen belonging to other Tɛnzugu clans and the other ritual functionaries of the *Bɔyar* whose presence is essential for the performance of the rites of accepting the pilgrims get about the same 'rake-off' as his near agnates. On a rough estimate I should say that the Gɔlibdaana keeps about half the profits and divides the other half among the other
[595] men interested in the business. This enables these others—his close agnates, his henchmen, and the other ritual functionaries of the *Bɔyar*—to have from five to nine wives each, where the ordinary native of similar age and status would have at most two or three wives; and the number of wives a man has is a good indication of his income in terms of food-supply and cash. The economic system of the Tallensi provides no outlets for this wealth in new economic enterprise. What cannot be invested in wives, live-stock, and clothes, or consumed in the form of

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have no clear notion of witchcraft, no detailed theories of its mode of operation, and no institutionalized means of combating or sterilizing it. A witch (*sɔri*) is supposed to fly about (*u ayarəme*) at night in the guise of a ball of fire; she—for the Tallensi tend to think of a witch as a woman, though they say that men may be witches too—is supposed to be clairvoyant, to 'see (*nye*)' hidden things. She can recognize fellow witches, foresee death coming to a particular person, prophesy an epidemic, and so forth; she may be beneficent, able to impart luck to a person in a mysterious way, or maleficent, killing people by eating (*ɔb*) their souls (*sii*). This is the sum of Tale ideas about the nature of witches. Actually, these qualities make up what is mainly an imaginary stereotype. One never hears of particular individuals being credited with the socially useful qualities or being suspected of possessing the anti-social qualities attributed to witches. Witchcraft is only attributed to people *ex post facto*, when an event occurs for which an explanation in terms of witchcraft is sought.

Witchcraft is something on the fringe of Tale mystical thought and ritual values. I have more than once heard elders of the most conservative way of thinking, to whom the native scheme of ritual values is the most important thing in life, declare roundly that there is no such thing as a witch. Though the Tallensi do not put it into clear words, they obviously feel that the idea of witchcraft is a mixture of superstition and folk-lore, and not a part of the system of mystical and ritual values that really matters for the conduct of life. Of course, superstition and folk-lore are not wholly negligible. Circumstances occur, now and then, in which people fall back on the idea of a witch's occult aggression in order to cope with anxieties and frustrations that are normally neutralized through the agency of the ancestor cult; and then a particular person may be accused of being a witch. Significantly, in every case that has come to my notice, some dating back twenty or thirty years and all of them together numbering less than ten, the accused has been a woman. Most accusations of this sort are in the first instance made by women against co-wives, and are symptomatic of the tensions inherent in the joint family.

An accusation of being a witch is the private affair of the accused's husband and his maximal lineage, her paternal family, and those of her *saarət* who are in touch with her. In former days, if the accusation was confirmed by a diviner, the accused might insist on undergoing the arrow ordeal (*kuh sɔ-peema*), or be compelled to do so by her husband's lineage and her *saarət* in order to prove her innocence. She had to stab herself with a poisoned arrow in public at the same time as a branch of a *keykay* (Ficus) tree was plucked; and if she were guilty, it was believed that she would die before the branch withered. But it is characteristic of the Tale attitude to witches that a person who died thus was accorded a proper funeral—unlike, for example, a person who

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she will become very discontented. A young wife sometimes runs off to her father's home because she thinks she ought to have her own *dug* and her husband has been dilatory about it; and she will refuse to return until he convinces her of his intention to build her *dug* immediately. The observance of this rule is an essential element in the structure of the domestic family. It is indispensable for the satisfactory working of the domestic economy and for the mutual adjustment of person to person. A wife's separate quarters stand for her relative autonomy as wife, mother and housekeeper, *vis-à-vis* the other women of the family.

As the head of the house is *yirdaana*, master of the house, so the senior woman of the house—his mother, or senior wife—is the *dugdaana*, the mistress of the rooms. Every woman is the *dugdaana* of her own apartments, but the mistress of the principal *dug* is the *dugdaana* of the whole house.

In a polygynous family, or what might be called a multicellular family, the senior *dugdaana* has more authority in domestic affairs, and more esteem in the eyes of the public than the other women of the household have. Whether she is the *yirdaana*'s mother or his senior wife, she is the central pillar of his domestic establishment, honorifically more than actively in the case of the former, actively as well as honorifically in the case of the latter.

One sign of this is that most of the ancestor and medicine shrines that are kept indoors rest in the *dɛndɔŋo* and rooms of the senior woman. They include a man's personal shrines, as well as those of which he is custodian as head of a lineage segment. Sacrifice is offered to these shrines in this *dɛndɔŋo*, the women and children of the family often taking part. A man's ancestors keep watch and ward both indoors and out over the things, the place, and the people most precious to him.

When a person dies he or she must not only be gathered to the ancestors, but must subsequently be ritually brought back, as a spirit, into the living quarters, the veritable home. The expression '*Kpeehu la dugni*—bring him [her] into the *dug*', used for this as well as the customary rites, make this clear.

The intimate domestic life of a family goes on mainly in the *dɛndɔŋo*. Meals are often cooked and always eaten there. Food is never cooked outside the homestead except for ritual or ceremonial purposes. A woman does much of her domestic work in her *dɛndɔŋo*. Her babies learn to crawl and to take their first steps there. She entertains guests and relatives, and receives her daughter's suitors there. When the crops are harvested they are spread out to dry in the *dɛndɔŋo* before being stored. A man often sits about in his wife's *dɛndɔŋo* when he has a leisurely manual task in hand. Youths and girls come to dance there when an elderly person's funeral is celebrated. And on pleasant nights, after a satisfying meal, men, women, and children sit there conversing or gossiping or asking riddles.

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occupying a single homestead. All the men of a joint family are therefore related to one another through a common father or grandfather or, infrequently, great-grandfather. A joint family may consist of two or more brothers (full or half-brothers or paternal cousins), with their wives and children, and perhaps an old mother; or a man and some or all of his married sons with their wives and children, together with unmarried sons and other dependants; or an old man, some or all of his married sons and grandsons, with their wives and children and other dependants —'sons' and 'grandsons' in the last two classes being understood in the native classificatory sense as including both own and deceased brothers' sons and grandsons. Joint families of the last-mentioned class are not very common. Here and there one meets a joint family combining features of two classes or having a rather wider range of agnates or other male kin; but these are unusual.

A joint family is obviously a composite unit. If the subordinate families constituting it are taken separately, some or all may be monogynous, elementary families; but one or more of the male members may have more than one wife, and there will thus be subordinate polygynous families within the joint family. For though a Talǝŋ starts his career as a family man with only one wife, his aim and ideal, throughout his life, is to have as many wives as he can afford. Actually, judging by the previously quoted sample,[1] the incidence of polygyny among the

[1] The following table sets out the relevant figures:

Table showing the Distribution of Wives of 146 Men over 18 Years of Age, belonging to 61 Domestic Families

Estimated age of men	*Married men*						*Single men*	
	Number of wives					*Total men*	*Unmarried*	*Widowers or deserted*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*			
18–30	32	3	..	..	..	35	18 (most under 30)	17 (most over 30)
31–45	21	13	3	2	..	39		
46 and over	14	14	3	5	1	37		
Totals	67	30	6	7	1	111	18	17
							35	

Percentages						*Total 146 men*	
Of whole sample	46	20·5	4·1	4·8	0·7	76% married	24% single
Of married men	60·4	27	5·4	6·3	0·9		

The table shows the distribution of effective wives, i.e. wives who fulfil both the sexual and the economic duties due from a wife, or, in a few cases, at least the economic duties. There were 9 non-effective wives, in addition, in this group: 3 incapacitated by leprosy or other chronic disease; 1 senile; 3 elderly women nominally inherited by their late husbands' younger brothers but

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596 Tallensi is only about 40 per 100 married men and two out of three
●595 polygynists have only two wives. The modal number of wives is one.

Moreover, plurality of wives is mainly the privilege of older men, because they have both more resources and a longer marital history than the young men. Three-quarters of the married men under 45 have only one wife each.

596 A joint family is an organized economic and jural unit forming a single household under the authority of the oldest by age or generation of the group of agnates upon which it is based. Its component families are its segments, ordered and articulated in conformity with the lineage relations binding this group of men to one another. This appears in the layout of the homestead. The head of the joint family is the hub of the whole house, as we have seen, and each wife has her own quarters. It is shown, for example, in the fact that a young married son with no children, or only one or two infant children, generally occupies one of the rooms in his mother's *dug*, or, if his mother is dead, in the senior *dugdaana*'s *dug*; for his conjugal family counts, as yet, only as a segment of this *dug* in the social and economic organization of the house.

Taken over a long enough period, the joint family is seen to be a transitory unit. As the younger male members grow up, marry, and have children of their own, inner tensions begin to assert themselves and a tendency to split up appears. If fission does not occur in the lifetime of the head of the joint family, it is almost invariably precipitated by his death. Some or all of the component families then set up in their own independent homesteads, though it may be some years before complete dispersion supervenes. Thus it happens that an elementary family, which was at one time a part of a joint family, comes to occupy its own

162 residing with grown-up sons; 2 inherited wives who had not yet joined the menage of their new husbands and were unlikely to do so for a considerable time, if at all. Seven of these non-effective wives were the wives of men in the 46 *plus* group. If these are reckoned as well, the distribution is altered somewhat in favour of the polygynists. There would then, for instance, be 3 men with 5 wives each.

In addition to the 111 married men, this sample of domestic families includes 35 single men, 18 of whom, mostly young men, had never been properly married, and 17 of whom were single at the time of the census, owing to the death or desertion of their wives.

Estimates of age given here and elsewhere in this book are very approximate. The difficulties of guessing the age of Africans in societies where chronological age is taken no notice of are well known. In making the above estimates I took the Tong Hills Expedition of 1911 as a base-line. From what I was told of the appearance, size, and activities of a person at the time of that well-remembered event, a guess could be made at his or her probable age in 1934. If one person's approximate age was established in this way, others who were agreed to be his or her contemporaries could be put into the same age-group. For example, the age-group 18–30 includes a number of men who said they were babes in arms in 1911, and the age-group 46 *plus* includes all those who were young married men *in* 1911.

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as a form of investment, if such it can be called. Indeed, over most of Taleland the buying and selling of farm-land is ritually prohibited.[1] Occasionally disputes arise between the heirs when farm-lands pass by inheritance. But these rare quarrels are considered to be despicable and are ascribed to idiosyncrasies of character. In any case they are quarrels over the apportionment of joint property and there is always the chance that the man who has come off worst will later inherit the very land he was deprived of.

It is the exact contrary with wives. They form the chief object of competition both between individuals and between corporate groups. This is explicitly admitted in the conventions ruling the abduction of wives and marriage with another man's ex-wife.[2] The prohibition against abducting the wife (or marrying an ex-wife) of a clansman, kinsman, or member of a locally contiguous clan admits the fact that such acts are the most prolific source of strife, leading, in the old days, to bloodshed at times. The corollary that it is permissible, nay, commendable, to abduct the wife of a member of a distant, unrelated clan is an expression of the idea that geographically distant and genealogically unconnected clans have no direct common interests.

Competition for wives always was and still is the chief source of conflict between individuals and groups in Taleland. More than 90 per cent. of all cases brought to chiefs' courts nowadays are concerned with wives, and they are always triangular affairs with two men competing for the woman or her offspring. The reason for this competitive attitude about wives in a society almost devoid of durable goods of great productive or prestige value and possessing few prestige-conferring offices is not difficult to see, as has been previously indicated. Wives are the sole means of attaining the supreme end of life for the natives, the perpetuation and increase of a man's lineage. Like land, which is a common interest to the whole nuclear and often inner lineage, wives are of common interest to all the members of their husbands' lineages (not only their inner lineages, but even their maximal lineages and clans), for all of whom the perpetuation of their line of descent is of transcendent importance. This idea, which is expressed in the principle of the levirate, lies behind many of the institutions we shall be considering in this chapter.

Tallensi maintain that marriageable young women have become much scarcer than a generation ago. They blame the chiefs and headmen, whose new-found wealth enables them to have large harems, thus robbing young men of possible wives. Tallensi say that girls naturally prefer to marry young men, who are more congenial to them sexually and socially, rather than old men, however prosperous or exalted they may be. But a girl cannot easily resist an offer of marriage from a chief

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. xi.
[2] Ibid., ch. iv.

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581 or headman or important elder, backed as it often is by lavish gifts to
595 her parents, security of the bride-price, and the attraction of his wealth
622 and power or status. Few parents would hesitate to force their daughter to accept such an offer. Chiefs and headmen do in fact have an excessive number of wives. The five biggest chiefs and headmen of the Tongo district had between them about 160 wives of all ages in 1936. Their predecessors of a generation ago would have had perhaps 30 between them, at the utmost. The extra 130 wives they have means that probably 100 other men have been cheated of wives. This has no doubt diminished the chances of early marriage for a proportion of young men, but not so greatly as the men assert. All the evidence of Tale domestic institutions and of Tale genealogies goes to show that wives were always highly prized because they were always at a premium.[1] In consequence, no unmarried girl or woman of child-bearing age lacks suitors, and no wife of child-bearing age need endure an intolerable marriage. She can always find another husband. That women take advantage of their scarcity value is what one would expect; but they do so to a smaller extent than one anticipates. This is due partly to the strength and stability of the patrilineal lineage system, expressed in inter-personal relations in the power of the *patria potestas*, and partly to the great value women set upon wifehood and motherhood. Life is a failure to a Tale woman who never becomes a wife and mother.

The Stability of Marriage

586 In consequence, partly, of the scarcity value of wives, but more, no
587 doubt, of the conflict of loyalties and interests which has to be overcome,
582 marriage tends to be unstable in the initial stages. A young man rarely settles down permanently with his first bride, and young women generally treat their first marriage as an experiment unless the husband is a much older man to whom they have been married by formal negotiation. In the course of collecting census material I noted the marriages of over a hundred men. There is not one man over the age of 30, approximately (excluding a few physically or psychologically abnormal men), who has failed to experience one or more unsuccessful and usually short-lived marriages. Most men of 30 to 40 can give a history of five

[582] [1] I have no demographic evidence suggesting that there was formerly or is now a marked deficiency of marriageable women as compared with men in Taleland. My own crude demographic inquiries suggest a sex ratio of about unity among the Tallensi. Polygynous marriage, therefore, inevitably means competition for wives, even though women are usually married by the age of 16 or 17, as near as one can guess, and men rarely succeed in finding a wife before the age of about 25. The natives maintain that the age of marriage for girls has been decreasing rapidly since the coming of the white man (cf. my paper, 'A Note on Fertility among the Tallensi of the Gold Coast', *Sociological Review*, xxv, 1943, 3–4).

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succeeds in avoiding intercourse with him she is not his wife, and may sleep with any other man without fear of being accused of adultery. Cases of this kind are common. A particularly instructive case was that of a wife whom Pal-Zəŋ inherited from his dead brother. As she was pregnant at the time, he did not attempt to sleep with her. She miscarried, but continued to put him off with excuses. The reason for this soon became apparent. An agnatic cousin ('brother' in native terminology) of Zəŋ's was living with him, who, being half blind, spent most of the day at home. This gave him the opportunity of ingratiating himself with the woman, and he became her lover. Though Zəŋ was indignant at the humiliation put upon him, and obviously burning with jealousy, he could do nothing about the affair. For it was not incest, as Zəŋ's marriage with the woman had never been consummated.

It follows from this rule that a woman cannot refuse to cohabit with her husband. It sometimes happens that a girl is given in marriage by her father to a man whom she does not like, and that she takes up this line of resistance. The husband then has the right to thrash her or to use other forms of force in order to make her yield. The story of how Baŋyɛlib consummated his first marriage is a somewhat ribald instance of this rule. The girl literally fought him off for days. Then one morning, as she was crawling out of their sleeping-room, his brother seized her by the neck and held her as in a vice, caught in the narrow doorway. She was helpless, and Baŋyɛlib, who had purposely stayed in the room, 'mounted her from behind', in the words of one of his brothers who told me the story. Another man I knew, in the same plight, sent to inform his father-in-law. The old man arrived at cockcrow next day in a towering rage and laid an ultimatum before his daughter. He was not going to eat or drink or budge from the door of her room until her husband told him that the marriage was consummated. The girl, weeping with humiliation, yielded immediately to this heartless form of third degree. Tallensi say that if a man has connexion with his wife for the first time in such circumstances she is at once impregnated—a bit of folk-lore that shows how marital cohabitation is felt to be essentially the means to procreation rather than to gratification.

Reciprocally, a man cannot refuse to cohabit with his wife. If he does, she will quarrel bitterly with him and leave him; and she will have the support of her father or guardian in this action. A polygynist must divide his sexual attentions equally among his wives, or else the neglected wives will quarrel with him and with their co-wives. Indeed, men say, somewhat cynically, that more family quarrels arise because of the jealousy (*yuur*) of co-wives over the sexual attentions of their common husband than for any other cause. Though a woman cannot prevent her husband from having a clandestine lover, she will resent it as a slight on her sexual attractions if she finds out, and make life uncomfortable for him in revenge.

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835 626 Finally, the prohibition of sexual relations between father and daughter or brother and sister in the expanded family also links up with this complex. Tallensi say that if a man's daughter becomes pregnant before marriage he will hasten to marry her off as soon as possible, if she does not elope with a suitor of her own accord. A man once told me that people do this for fear that it might be said of them, 'Oh, so-and-so is not marrying his daughter off because he wants to keep her for a wife for himself'. I do not know if this statement accurately represents the way men feel the pressure of public opinion in cases of this sort; but it is an accurate indication of the feeling that a woman's procreative powers are out of place in her father's home and belong properly to her husband's home.

The Adjustment of Co-Wives to One Another

595 We have still to consider one of the main problems of adjustment that face a woman in her husband's family, her relations with her co-wives (*nentaa*, pl. *nentaas*). These include both her husband's other wives and his brothers' wives. A woman refers to a co-wife as 'younger (or older) sibling of the same sex (*pit* or *bier*)', and addresses her by her clan sobriquet, e.g. Namooga. A woman's children describe her co-wives as 'mother' (*ma*), with the suffix *pit* or *bier* according as she is junior or senior to their own mother, and address her as 'mother of such-and-such a clan', e.g. *ma Namooga*.

Women do not, as a rule, object to their husbands having other wives as well. Indeed, it often happens that a monogamist's wife presses him to marry again so that there should be someone to share the work of the household with her, or even takes the initiative in finding another wife for him. It is quite common for women to bring younger clan sisters, or a brother's daughter, a sister's daughter, or a daughter of a mother's brother's lineage, to live with them with a view to their eventually marrying their husbands or husbands' brothers. From such marriages spring cognatically related matri-segments of a lineage, with a special link through their progenitrices in addition to their agnatic ties.

Through this custom of fetching in (*pie na*) a kinswoman-wife (*poya-soog*) one often finds women related by kinship married into the same joint family or the same expanded family. But this is not a preferential marriage. It is due simply to the inertia of kinship. A woman who wants to bring a girl into her husband's house usually does so because she has need of someone to help her with the care of an infant or because she is ill or elderly and has no daughter or daughter-in-law to relieve her of the heaviest domestic tasks. And she looks naturally to her kinsfolk, upon whom she has claims by right of birth, to provide her with a suitable girl. Again, though the Tallensi do not like two full or half-sisters to marry the same man or to marry into the same joint family, it is not a taboo. A man who particularly likes his son-in-law and his people

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readily consents to another daughter's marrying into the same joint family; and this cordiality is easily extended to more distant clansmen on both sides. A Tɛnzugu man who has a son-in-law at Zubiuŋ with whom his relations are cordial will be pleased to see another daughter marry this son-in-law or one of his close agnates; and if the son-in-law himself or a member of his medial lineage comes to seek the hand of a daughter of the father-in-law's medial lineage, the men of that lineage would be favourably disposed to the suitor.

Another factor favouring successive marriages with women of the same lineage or clan is the preference of the natives for wives from a nearby rather than a distant clan. A man looking for an additional wife tends to turn his eyes first to the same neighbouring settlements in which he formerly sought a wife, and men of the same lineage tend to seek wives in the same settlements, as we shall find.

When co-wives refer to one another as 'sisters' they are using a kinship term in a metaphorical sense to indicate their social equivalence—that is, their identity of role and status in their conjugal home and settlement. But if they are kin they speak of one another as 'sisters' in a deeper sense. They have a bond of mutual attachment that holds independently of their relations as wives of the same man or the same lineage. As 'sisters' in the kinship sense they help each other more regularly and more altruistically; they share such things as foodstuffs and firewood more readily; they mother each other's children with more devotion and with a greater feeling of common interest in them; they live together more harmoniously, in general, than unrelated co-wives. This is especially true of a woman and a co-wife whom she has 'fetched in' as the term *poyasoog*, literally a *soog* sister wife (that is, a wife who is like a *soog* sister to another wife), suggests. The older woman watches over the younger almost as if she were a younger full sister or her own daughter.

Tallensi take it for granted that co-wives are apt to quarrel. 'Oh yes', both men and women say with a laugh, if they are asked about it, 'co-wives quarrel—but nevertheless they stay on.' The point is that quarrels between co-wives are taken as a matter of course and do not lead to a wife's desertion. These quarrels may be nothing more than the flaring up of frayed tempers; for among the Tallensi, as among ourselves, people who live so intimately together as the members of a family are prone to fall out over trifles. Or they may be real fights, beginning with taunts and insults and ending with blows. Neighbours, usually men of the husband's lineage, hearing the uproar, may rush in to separate the women, if the husband himself or other men of his family are not on the spot to do so. For there is no one among the women of a household with authority to discipline the others. The senior mistress of the home, whether she is the mother or the senior wife of the owner of the house, ranks above the rest of the women, but has no disciplinary authority over them.

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595 578 According to the natives, quarrels between co-wives are often due to one or other of them having an intractable disposition. Men add that women lack self-control and are very prone to petty jealousy; they are apt to quarrel if they think they are being unfairly treated, if, for instance, one wife seems to receive more than a fair share of her husband's attention. But when actual cases of such quarrels are examined they are seen to be an expression of the tensions springing from the cleavages in the structure of the domestic family. They are temporary disturbances of the balance between the relatively autonomous matri-central *dug* and the inclusive patri-central *yir*. That is why they occur so rarely between women who are related by kinship or clanship, and who therefore think of their *dugət* as subdivisions of a single wider *dug*. Co-wives live in harmony as long as they act in the interests of the common *yir*; dissensions arise between them when they do not accept the paramountcy of the *yir*, and assert their relative autonomy in relation to one another. In the normal run of family life the interests of the common *yir* come first, for the sustenance of the family and the general welfare of all its members depend upon proper co-operation between them, resting on mutual loyalty and goodwill.

595 462 241 The women of the household, both those who are co-wives to one another, and those who are mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, or mother and daughter to one another, usually work together harmoniously to perform their share of the productive labour of agriculture. They work under the direction of the head of the house, and the products of their labour accrue to the common food supply. This is a part of the co-operative economic organization of the household. Thus at sowing or harvest time one often sees a whole family working together in the fields. When a sowing party is at work one sees the men striding vigorously ahead, dibbling the holes with their long heavy dibbles cut from saplings, while the women follow behind, chattering and laughing amicably as they sow the grain. And when the harvest is in full swing, one sees similar cheerful family parties out on the field or homeward bound at dusk in Indian file, the men in front, perhaps carrying their pear-shaped wicker coops in which they have collected a brood of chickens that had been allowed to run in the fields during the day, the women sauntering close behind them, the heavy baskets of grain on their heads, and small boys and girls gambolling in the rear blowing [534] their whistles and shaking their rattles (*kiŋkaŋah*) of serrated calabash disks.

595 The independence of the *dug* comes out in the utilization of the food-supply. As the women have to supply the vegetables for cooking the relish which the natives regard as an indispensable accompaniment to their heavy porridge, each woman who has her own *dug* is entitled to a vegetable patch beside the wall of the homestead. Except for the senior woman of the house, who has a slightly larger vegetable patch

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595 than the others, all the women must be allocated more or less equal plots for this purpose. Each woman, with the help of her daughters or a [222 263] daughter-in-law, collects and stores wild herbs and edible leaves, buys condiments and seasonings like salt, pepper, and locust bean balls, sometimes with the proceeds of her own petty trading in the markets, and collects shea nuts for the preparation of shea butter, the most important source of fat and the most prized emollient in the native cuisine, for the use of her own *dug*. If a man gives a penny or twopence to one wife for the purchase of seasonings, he must, either immediately or on subsequent market days, give some money to his other wives for this purpose. If he obtains some meat, he must either distribute it amongst all his wives or give all of it to his senior wife to use or preserve for the benefit [846] of the whole family. Only a wife in childbed is entitled to have extra luxuries, which it is the duty of her husband to provide.

595 Though each woman cooks for herself with an eye to the feeding of her own children and her husband, in the first place, co-wives are 252 obliged to share food prepared with grain from the common supply. In times of plenty, if all the wives of a man have cooked a meal, each woman dishes out a portion of porridge and the accompanying relish for her husband, a portion for herself and her child or children eating with her, and a smaller portion for each of her co-wives. The husband should taste all the dishes sent in to him by his wives, and should pass on to the older children who do not eat with their mothers the dishes he does not want for himself. In times of scarcity a man's wives may cook in rotation for the whole family. But if a woman has a private supply of grain, obtained by trade or from her own relatives, she is entitled to use it for feeding her own children and the husband only; she need not give anything to her co-wives or their children.

596 In the production and utilization of food-supplies, as this brief sketch shows, the common interests of the *yi* are distinctly paramount. Co-wives co-operate most harmoniously, both among themselves and with the other women of the household, in this sphere of family life. In the organization of productive labour and of the domestic economy, and in the conventions regulating mutual help in this sphere, the dependence on one another of all the members of a household for their sustenance is constantly emphasized. But the relative autonomy of the *dug* is never wholly submerged. The women do not pool the products of their individual labour and enterprise. They do not pool their utensils, and family quarrels sometimes arise because one woman or one woman's child has borrowed and damaged a utensil belonging to another. They keep their firewood supplies, the accumulation of which is one of their most arduous tasks, jealously separate; and they do the same with vegetables and seasonings. There is sometimes friction between co-wives over the use of the grinding-room. But it is significant of the balance usually maintained between the centrifugal tendencies of the *dug* and the

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resignation that was touching in the circumstances, that he missed his mother dreadfully. When she was alive, he explained, he never went to bed hungry. She always had something for him to eat even in the leanest times. But nowadays he often slept hungry; for his other 'mothers' had their own children to think of; in times of scarcity they would put aside extra food for their own children but not for him. At best he might get the scraps.

The genealogical and social differentiation of a woman and her children from every other woman and her children of the same domestic family is the kernel of the notion of uterine (*soog*) descent. The cultural definition of this notion gets its psychological content, its meaning for the individual, from the relations of mother and child and co-wife to co-wife.

To every woman, therefore, her own children are the most complete incarnation of her own social self, of her autonomy and status in the family, and of the differentiation of her *dug* from those of her co-wives. That is what the concept *soog* means for a mother in relation to her children. Emotionally wrapped up in them as she is, she becomes almost anarchical in her concern for their welfare. There are women who resent it strongly if a co-wife scolds one of their children; and it is quite common for a woman to get into a fury if her child is struck by a co-wife's child, let alone by a co-wife herself. Many quarrels between co-wives begin in this way. That is why children are taught to keep out of their mothers' co-wives' rooms as much as possible and to behave carefully if they go into them.

The ever-present tension between co-wives, reduced to a minimum at most times, occasionally bursts out acutely. This is liable to happen if a child gets ill of a malady that defies all attempts to cure it, the more so if it is an unusual sickness of sudden onset. The distracted mother is likely then to turn on a co-wife (another wife of her husband, or a wife of one of his brothers) whose own children are well and happy and therefore the bitterest reminder of her evil fortune. Being co-wives the women are sure to have had differences and even quarrels in the past. So now the sick child's mother accuses her co-wife of being a witch (*zɔi*) and of having caused the illness of the child. Infrequent as accusations of witchcraft were in former days and are now, Tallensi say that most of them were made by women against a co-wife owing to the illness or death of a child. This is the more significant in view of the association between witchcraft and uterine descent. An accusation of witchcraft brands a woman and her children equally, but it does not impugn the male line or, consequently, the *yir*.

When hostility between co-wives reaches this pitch it cannot but result in a serious disturbance of the unity and cohesion of the family. Formerly, as we have learnt, the accused woman might have been compelled to undergo the arrow ordeal, or would herself, backed by her

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paternal kin and more strongly by her uterine kin (*saarət*), insist on doing so. If she survived, she and her children and other *soog* kin would never forgive her accuser. There would be chronic friction in the family. If she died, her children and other *soog* kin would still resent the imputation against them and would have a lifelong grievance against her accuser and her children. The accuser would in any case bear the ritual blame, and would be in danger of mystical retribution. Nowadays, to judge by one case that came to my notice, the accused woman and her kin insist on an oath by the *bɔɣar*, usually the *bɔɣar* of the husband's medial lineage. Both women swear to the justice of their case before the *bɔɣar*, and the one who suffers a serious misfortune soonest—a misfortune such as grave sickness or death in her own *dug* of the house—is deemed to be in the wrong. Whatever the outcome, it amounts to one member of the family invoking the *bɔɣar* which watches over the welfare of the whole group to injure another member of the unit; and this is a sacrilege, even if it is done in the name of justice. It must be atoned for by sacrifices to which both women and their husband (or husbands) have to contribute. But the *bɔɣar* is never wholly appeased; it may still bring misfortune on the family for the sacrilege. And, of course, both women and their *soog* kin might continue to harbour resentment. An accusation of witchcraft, itself the symptom of the conflicts latent in the structure of the polygamous family, breeds endless discord.

But it must be emphasized that such cases are rare. For the most part women rub along pretty well with their co-wives. In this the senior wife (*pɔɣakpeem*)—seniority being reckoned according to order of marriage—may exercise a great deal of influence, especially if, as is likely, she is older than the others. Though she has no disciplinary authority over her younger co-wives, she has considerable moral authority over them. As her husband's closest confidante among his wives she knows all the affairs of the family and has its interests close at heart. She stands for the common allegiance of the wives to their husband and the family. A wise and tactful senior wife will keep an eye on the household economy and on the children without seeming to interfere with the liberty of her younger co-wives. Looking up to her with respect and affection, her younger co-wives will accept advice and guidance from her that does much to make the routine of family life smooth and pleasant. The fiction that she is the real mistress of the house (*dugdaana*) and that all the children 'belong' to her in a special sense gives her a formal status that makes this easier. If a suitor calls to see a girl of the family he must pay his respects to the senior wife before he goes to greet the girl's own mother. If a woman's son-in-law sends her gifts of sweet potatoes, yams, and guinea-fowls at the time of the Harvest Festival, she will call all her co-wives proudly to see the gifts, and will distribute some of the tubers among them; but in addition the senior wife will receive a guinea-fowl as a mark of special honour. In such ways is the mistress of the

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house apprised of what is going on in the quarters of the younger women and enabled to exercise benevolent supervision over them.

Her supervision is of special importance when any of the younger women is confined. She sees to it that mother and child are properly attended, that the rites of confinement and of emergence from seclusion are properly performed, that mother and babe are bathed in the prescribed way, and that the mother is given nourishing food. I was passing Ɔmara's homestead one afternoon, about a fortnight after the birth of a child to one of his wives, and called in. The new baby's mother was just coming out of the gateway with an empty water-pot on her head, and I noticed that she was looking far from well. Ɔmara's senior wife, a woman of sterling character, unsoured even by the leprosy that was rapidly getting a hold on her, was sitting outside in the shade. 'Where are you going to?' asked the older woman. 'To the water-hole,' replied her young co-wife. 'Don't go alone,' said the senior wife, 'I'll come with you'; and she rose to accompany the girl. For the first few weeks after the birth of her child a woman must not go about alone outside the homestead. She is still suffering from 'the dreams of a parturient woman (*pɔɣarɔɣah za'ahug*)'; that is, she is weak and liable to hallucinations or attacks of terror—or, as the natives think of it, to attacks from evil trees and stones—which might drive her mad. That was why the older woman accompanied the young mother. Many such incidents could be quoted in illustration of the concern shown by a senior wife for the welfare of her juniors.

Of course, not all senior wives exercise their role in a wise and unselfish spirit. A woman with an overbearing disposition may make life difficult for her juniors. One result will be that each woman tends to keep strictly to her own *dug* so as to avoid clashing with the senior wife or the other women, and co-operation between co-wives tends to follow the letter of convention rather than the spirit of family unity. Again, there are families in which the senior wife has through age, infirmity, or weakness of character resigned the effective supervision of the household to a younger co-wife, though she still remains the titular senior. But observation shows that on the whole senior wives conform to the pattern we have outlined above. Their position in the family, their responsibilities and privileges, shape them to this pattern.

It must be remembered, also, that the size and stage of development of a family have a great influence on the relations between co-wives. In a family like that of Da'amo'o of Tɔŋ-Dekpieŋ who has but recently set up in his own homestead, there are only three women, two being Da'amo'o's wives and the third his younger brother's wife. They are all young women round about the age of 20, two with an infant each and the other still a maiden (*pɔɣasarɔt*). In such a family the differentiation of *dug* from *dug* is rudimentary. The three girls work in co-operation and live together harmoniously like sisters and with no visible distinction

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If a person is ill tempered or unnecessarily sharp with him, or appears to dislike him, a Talən retorts with 'Why do you dislike me? Am I your *nyeer*, or what? (*I yaagəm bo? Man a i nyeer bɛ?*)' This formula is always spoken half-mockingly; for the rivalry of successive children, though assumed to be in the very nature of their relationship, is not taken too seriously. It is not, like the underlying rivalry of father and first-born son, subject to ritual sanctions. It is simply an acute expression of the familiarity and equality of siblings and does not destroy their solidarity.[1] Tallensi themselves say that successive siblings often get on together admirably and stand together as staunchly as any other full siblings. I have never heard it said that *soog* brothers are quicker to set up separate households if they are successive siblings than if they are not.

Tale custom recognizes the rivalry of successive siblings in a number of other ways. Thus successive siblings (this applies chiefly to brothers) may not be buried in the same grave. If they are, their spirits will be continually quarrelling and persecuting their descendants until they are exhumed and separated. Again, successive sisters may not be married to the same man or even to the same clan. But this rule is, to my own knowledge, often broken. If they do happen to be married into the same clan the sisters must avoid being pregnant at the same time or, if they are, they must not see each other during their pregnancy. If they do one or both will miscarry. Here it is belief rather than practice that is a sign of the rivalry of successive siblings. Tallensi object to having two sisters married to the same man for prudential reasons. They say that it is obviously more difficult to get eight cows out of one man in payment of bride-price than it is to get four cows. Nevertheless it does sometimes occur. A well-to-do son-in-law who has his father-in-law's esteem can often persuade the old man to give him another daughter to wife. If the girls are successive siblings, a very simple magical rite involving the burying of a hoe at the entrance of the husband's homestead serves to 'cut' their *nyeer* relationship.[2]

[1] I do not know whether successive siblings quarrel more often than non-successive siblings. Tallensi say they do. Knowing the Tallensi, I have no doubt that conventional expectation itself acts as a stimulus to petty wrangling between successive siblings. Every time they have a disagreement not only onlookers but they themselves put the conventional interpretation on the situation, and this is bound to make them more touchy in relation to each other than to other siblings. In every aspect of Tale social life cultural definitions and expectations direct behaviour in this way. On the other hand, I knew several pairs of successive siblings who got on extremely well together and to all appearances never said a cross word to each other. Tallensi admit that this is quite common and explain it by the invariable stock phrase 'It 's all a matter of character'.

[2] A question that immediately suggests itself is, whence does the rivalry of successive siblings arise? I have put this question to many Tallensi. The usual answer is in terms of the cliché that 'it is in the nature of things (*de yɛl nla*)'.

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former. The taboo emphasizes the superiority of the male members in spite of genealogical equivalence. There is an obverse to this taboo. The token funeral performed for a woman by her father's people, after her real funeral at her husband's home, is made for a *pɔɣayabəlɛg-kpɛŋ* not by her own father's heirs but by the head of the inner or medial or even maximal lineage, her status-brother, so to speak. Tallensi say she belongs to the whole lineage not to her paternal family.

To revert to the levirate, the fundamental rule is that a man's widow may be inherited only by a 'brother' or a 'grandson' in his own clan or a linked clan, or by a 'sister's son' in an unrelated clan. The two principles involved are those of the equivalence of siblings and of the equivalence of alternate generations. A 'sister's son's' leviratic rights go back to the notion that his 'mother' might have been a man and a 'brother' of the dead man. He is exercising the rights that might have been his 'mother's'; hence this, too, is a recognition of the equivalence of siblings. What is absolutely prohibited is to inherit the widow of a 'son' or a 'father'.

In theory, as we know, these rights extend to 'brothers', 'grandsons', and 'sisters' sons' in the widest connotation of these terms. Joint leviratic rights is one of the critical norms of clanship,[1] implying that all men of the clan are 'brothers'. In practice these rights are neither absolute, nor are they equal for all men who are ostensibly entitled to them. Various factors enter into the picture, but the most important are the widow's preferences and the genealogical distance between her dead husband and whoever is seeking her hand. The strongest efforts are made to prevent a widow of child-bearing age from remarrying out of the nuclear, or at most inner, lineage of her late husband. His full and half-brothers have the strongest claim to the widow. This is based not only on the argument of genealogical proximity but on what this implies. They have contributed by their labour to the bride-price that was paid for her, and if she marries a distant clansman of theirs they lose the returns on this that children represent; for a man marrying a distant clan-brother's widow need not, in theory, refund the bride-price the latter's nuclear lineage gave for her. Actually a refund of the bride-price is often demanded in such cases and usually paid to avoid ill-feeling between the two inner lineages concerned. In addition, full and half-brothers are the dead man's coheirs. They take possession of the patrimonial property he administered during his lifetime. They accept responsibility for his debts and assume the custody of his children. For all these acts the Tallensi use the concept *vaa* (to inherit or succeed to). So they say a man *vaa* (inherits) his late brother's land, livestock, and children; and it is just, therefore, that he should also inherit his privileges and rights, especially in the matter of his widow. As brothers of the same nuclear lineage are coheirs of their patrimonial

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 41.

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property it is good enough if she marries any one of them. In practice, a widow of child-bearing age who has children by her late husband usually consents to remarry one of his close brothers.

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Next to a brother of the nuclear lineage, a brother of the late husband's inner lineage is considered to have a strong claim to his widow's hand. If a man dies leaving two widows of child-bearing age it is considered proper for one of them to be given to a member of her late husband's nuclear lineage and for the other to go to another nuclear segment of the same inner lineage. If a widow appears to be unwilling to marry her late husband's half-brother, for example, and is prepared to marry one of his 'brothers' of the same inner lineage, she is usually allowed to do so by the head of her husband's nuclear lineage. The new husband is still spoken of as having inherited the widow. In every case that came under my notice widows of child-bearing age married into their late husband's inner lineage if they had young children. But in a few cases, amounting to about three out of ten, these second marriages broke down after a time. Childless young widows often prefer to go back to their parental home and try their luck again on the marriage market.

Beyond the range of the inner lineage a 'brother' of the dead man has only the rights of a clansman. If the widow is of child-bearing age he will have to be very circumspect in courting her; for he can only marry her if she chooses him in preference to other claimants, and this means she must be courted. Hence it is more usual to speak of 'marrying' (*di*) a widow than of 'inheriting' (*vaa*) her in such cases. But it would be a very bold woman who, left a widow while still capable of bearing children, rejected a husband's brother of the same inner lineage in favour of a clansman of his. Only in exceptional cases would such an action not create ill feeling between the two clan segments concerned. Such an exceptional case occurred when Baroog died leaving nine widows. His father tried hard to persuade several distant clansmen of his to seek the widows in marriage. The reason was that Baroog had no adult brothers in his nuclear lineage and so few in his inner lineage that they would not be able to inherit all the widows. For few men wish to inherit more than one widow at a time. Rather than let them return to their fathers and be sought in marriage by men of other clans, Baroog's father preferred to see them marry distant clansmen of his.

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Widows beyond the age of child-bearing have complete freedom of choice in selecting a new husband from among their late husband's clansmen. Often such marriages are merely nominal. The woman continues to live with a grown-up son and her new husband comes to visit her occasionally and sends her a little grain now and then. If the widow has no adult son she will live with her new husband, adding to the labour power of his household and to its indirect sources of income through the gifts she obtains from her patrilineal kin, for example, or any private property of her own, such as a couple of sheep or goats.

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Inheritance of a grandfather's widow by a grandson, in the patrilineal line, is confined to the inner or at most the medial lineage for the simple reason that generation differences are not reckoned beyond those limits. Such marriages are not common because few men live long enough to have adult grandsons. The case of Tiezien, previously recorded, who married his grandfather Kuŋkoŋki's young widow is the only one of its kind I encountered. For at least another generation or two the custom of inheriting a grandfather's widow will probably survive in that lineage. For Nyaaŋzum, Tiezien's proxy father whom he brought up, is the last of his generation in that medial lineage, hence his widows will have to go to his own or classificatory grandsons.

A sister's son (*ahəŋ*) cannot marry his true mother's brother's (*ahəb*) widow. That would be incest, since he identifies his *ahəb* with his mother and therefore thinks of him as a quasi-father. He can marry his *ahəb*'s son's widow or his *ahəb*'s father's widow; for he regards the son as a 'brother', and the father is his grandfather. If the sister's son and mother's brother are uterine kin (*saarət*), marriage of the latter's son's widow to the former is generally approved of by the dead man's inner lineage—provided, of course, there are no better claimants among the dead man's brothers—for a uterine *ahəŋ*, as we shall see more fully presently, is considered to be almost as closely related to his mother's brother's nuclear lineage as a born member of it. Nevertheless, such marriages are rare, and the few instances I heard of all seemed to be due to special circumstances. In one case, in which I knew the parties personally, the woman was suspected of being sterile, and the sister's son was known to be a special favourite of his mother's brother; in others the women were apparently too old for child-bearing.

In theory any member of another clan who can trace kinship with the clan of a widow's late husband through an ancestress can be called a 'sister's son' or a 'grandson (*yaaŋ*)' in the widest classificatory sense. I heard of two or three cases of such distant *ahəs* marrying the widows of members of their classificatory 'mother's brother's lineage', but the women were all elderly and the marriages were purely nominal. There was one case, however, in which a man eloped with the widow of a member of the inner lineage from which his paternal great-grandmother had come. This was widely spoken of as a scandal, and the pair were never forgiven by the first husband's nuclear lineage; but nothing could be done about it as the *ahəŋ* had the support of the letter of custom. The truth is that a 'sister's son' has no chance against the corporate solidarity of his 'mother's brother's' lineage. He can succeed only if they tacitly withdraw their claims or openly give him permission to court the widow.[1]

The levirate thus brings out clearly the social equivalence of siblings and shows how it is graded in accordance with genealogical distance.

[1] Cf. p. 240 above, and Ch. XI below.

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593 595 We might mention here that the institution of the sororate, which is considered by some authorities[1] to be the natural complement of the levirate, only exists in a rudimentary—some might say vestigial—form among the Tallensi. It comes up if a man loses his only wife and is left a lone widower. Then his father-in-law sends a party of mourners to the funeral who take with them a young girl of his clan—perhaps one of his own daughters, perhaps the daughter of a 'brother' of his inner or medial lineage. This girl, a real or classificatory sister of the dead wife, is presented to the grief-stricken widower. She has been brought, the father-in-law's messengers say, 'to sit on your knees, to console you, to dry your tears, to be your wife' and so take the place of her dead sister. It is, however, more a gesture of condolence than a real offer of a substitute for the dead wife. Tallensi say that very occasionally the girl might stay on as the wife of the widower; most commonly she goes home immediately after the funeral or within a few weeks. Her deputy wifehood is purely ceremonial, for she is usually too young to do all the housekeeping or to be slept with.

428 The rules of inheritance among brothers also illustrate the gradation of their social equivalence in accordance with their genealogical distance. These rules have been considered from various angles in earlier contexts and little remains to be added. Their operation, as we have seen, depends on the conditions of economic co-operation to a very considerable extent. If two brothers farm together they automatically have joint rights in all lands, livestock, and other resources they possess. If one dies the other does not so much inherit his property and position in society as amalgamate it with his own. What was formerly managed by two men conjointly now becomes the concern of one man. There is practically no change to begin with, in the social relations of their dependants as the result of the death of one brother. When Nindoyat died his *soog* brother Yintee inherited the homestead they had both occupied. Nindoyat's wives at first stayed on as Yintee's wives, his children naturally remained in the homestead. They had lost their own father, but there was no change in their social position or their economic condition as a result of his death. If brothers farm independently they inherit from each other in order of seniority and of degree of consanguinity. Patrimonial property, rights, and ritual objects that have been transmitted intact from their fathers are inherited strictly by seniority amongst the group of brothers who trace their descent to the original holder of these possessions. But property acquired by the deceased's own father goes only to his brothers by the same father, in order of seniority. And the custody of his children will pass to his genealogically nearest brother whether or not he is the heir to the patrimonial property.

593 428 Here a revealing jural fiction deserves mention. Brothers are thought

[1] Cf. Lowie, R., *Primitive Society*, p. 33.

264 Each family eats in its own close, while the man usually eats in that of his senior wife, and his other wives each send him in a dish of food.

252 As we have already mentioned, each woman in a polygynous household cooks for the husband and her own family. Their cooking
595 is not synchronized, but as the evening meal is always made at sunset, there is no considerable discrepancy in the time of eating by the different families.

264 The man eats with his 'youngest' child, that is, the last one to have stopped suckling. If he has unmarried brothers dependent upon him they, too, eat with him. A few yards further off his sons—young men and boys—form another group, while the woman herself and the young girls eat apart at the kitchen door. Two women sharing a kitchen eat together. Men and women do not eat together except in circumstances which will be noted later.

A calabash of porridge, a dish of soup, a calabash of drinking-water and another for washing the hands are set down for each group. When the senior member of each group has taken his place the others settle in a circle round the food. In order of seniority each one washes his or her right hand perfunctorily. The eldest member is the first to begin eating, but he is also the first to stop. The youngest member finishes last and is usually encouraged to clear the dish; for an older member to continue eating with the youngest is to invite the ridicule of the others. The food is eaten with the right hand. A piece of porridge is broken off and dipped into the soup with cupped fingers. If meat is present each member breaks off a tiny morsel of it to taste. During the meal the water is passed round for every one to drink. Though each group seated round a dish of food acts independently, those sitting in the same close with the head of the household do not begin before him. Eating is a serious business; there is no conversation at meal-times, and as soon as a group has finished they disperse.

264 In addition to sending in food to her husband, a woman sends a
595 dish of porridge with soup to her husband's mother, and a dish to each of her co-wives belonging to her own food economy unit. Thus, each woman has to cook enough for her husband and family and to exchange with every kitchen supplied from the same grain store. This rule, naturally, does not hold for food provided by a woman's

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own efforts in time of scarcity. Each woman cares for her own children only. She keeps food for an absent child, but will offer some to a co-wife's child only if it asks her for it. But the man will give food to all his children. As a rule, he eats the portion sent in by his senior wife and tastes a little from each dish brought in by the others. When he has had his fill he calls his children to come and eat the rest, always remembering those who have not had enough. Thus the discrepancy in the distribution of grain, where each woman gets the same share irrespective of the number of mouths she has to feed, is adjusted by the man in his fair re-distribution of the cooked food.

This general pattern is not a rigid one, but is adapted to the structure of every household and to its special circumstances, e.g. a man would eat with his wife and small children from a common dish if they happened to be alone in the compound. To do so if another wife were present would cause envy and quarrelling between the women; these arrangements are a matter of etiquette and not of taboo.

The natives account for the custom of a man's eating with his 'youngest' child on the grounds that a child must eat properly in order to grow and must be taught to do so. They say, also, that it thus learns to know its father, and not only its mother whom it is always following about. We have not sufficient material to judge the validity of this interpretation; it is quoted here to indicate the native valuation of the sharing of food in the family.

Infants are given morsels of porridge as soon as they can swallow solid food, and by the age of 18 months can feed themselves dexterously. They are weaned by the age of three not by a forcible or harsh separation from the breast, but by gradual habituation to adult food. The emphasis on the adequate feeding of children is shown, also, in the manner in which *sayaksrət*, left-over porridge, is reserved for them. Porridge remaining after the noon meal is stirred into the porridge cooked at sunset; if it is left after the evening meal it is given to children cold for breakfast next day. Only after they have eaten their fill will adults have some. In the months of plenty children often have a morning meal of *sayaksrət*; at other times a handful of ground-nuts, or a dish of flour-water or of dawa-dawa powder must suffice.

Flour-water (*zɔmkuom*) deserves a note to itself. There are two ways